

Alerting and Communicating Devices for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People – What's Available Now

CONTINUED

Captioned Film/Video Programs

On August 7, 1997 the Federal Communications Commission adopted an order to include roles and implementation schedule for the captioning of video programs, including access to video programming for a person with hearing disabilities. A service rather than a device, Captioned Film/Video program is a distribution program for feature and education films captioned for viewers who are deaf. To receive the films, deaf or hard of hearing people must form a group and apply for membership to Captioned Film/Video Program. A Captioned Film group may meet in a member's home, schools, halls, senior centers, and nursing homes for regular showing of films chosen from the captioned films catalog. The only cost to the group is the postage charge for returning the 16mm films to the Distribution office.

Alerting Devices/Systems

How does a person with a hearing loss know when there is a knock at the door? Or the baby's crying? Or the telephone is ringing? Or the alarm clock is buzzing? The various alerting and alarm systems that signal deaf and hard of hearing people include: baby-cry alarms, doorbell alerting systems, paging devices, telephone signaling systems, smoke alarm systems, security and wake up alarms. The signal may be visual (a flashing light); auditory (an increase in amplification); or vibrotactile (a vibrator). If an alarm clock is wired to a vibrator placed under the bed pillow, the user is literally shaken awake. Auditory signals are sometimes used in conjunction with either visual or vibratory signals. Sometimes a single flashing light signaling system installed in a deaf or hard of hearing person's home may be wired to alert the person to several different sounds. For example, when the light flashes how does the person know where to go? A simple code helps identify the source of the sound; three slow flashes may mean the doorbell; three quick flashes may mean the telephone; regular on-off flashes may signal the baby's cries.

Listening Devices and Systems

As a benefit of modern technology, a number of amplification systems are now available to compensate for a hearing loss. In addition to the aforementioned telephone aids, there are listening enhancement systems for group and individual use. Any of these systems and devices may be incorporated into an existing facility or room.

Communication Access Systems for Groups and Large Rooms

In a large room, a person with a hearing loss – even with a powerful hearing aid – may have difficulty understanding the voice of the speaker on the stage, on the screen, at the podium, or in the pulpit. Background noise and room reverberation compete with speech sounds and exaggerate the listening problems experienced by hard of hearing people in such settings. However, a number of electronic systems can help overcome the problems by bringing the speaker closer to the ears of the listener and by eliminating much of the background noise. Each large room hearing enhancement system has two major components: 1) a transmitter that sends the signals and 2) a receiver that picks up those signals and delivers them at increased sound levels into the ears or hearing aids of people with a hearing loss – wherever they may be sitting. Among the general categories of communication access system for groups and large rooms are audio loops systems, AM systems, FM sound systems and infrared systems.

